

DR Congo rushes team to Ebola zone

August 2 2018

DR Congo on Thursday flew a team led by Health Minister Oly Ilunga Kalenga to an eastern region hit by Ebola, the country's second outbreak in less than three months, a local official said.

The delegation from Kinshasa "arrived in Beni today," the city's deputy mayor, Modeste Bakwanamaha, told AFP.

On Wednesday, Ilunga said the eastern province of North Kivu had notified the ministry of 26 suspected cases of Ebola, 20 of them fatal, in the region of Beni.

Four of six samples later tested positive for the haemorrhagic virus.

Twelve health ministry experts would be sent to Beni on Thursday to help oversee the response to the [outbreak](#), Ilunga added.

The Beni region lies in the heart of a conflict zone gripped by a notorious Ugandan-linked Islamist militia called the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF).

On July 24, the government declared the end to a 10-week outbreak of Ebola that struck northwestern Democratic Republic of Congo, claiming 33 lives.

The latest outbreak is the 10th in the DRC since 1976, when it was discovered in the north of the country, then called Zaire, and named after a river nearby.

In Geneva, the World Health Organization (WHO) said most of the new cases were recorded in the district of Mangina, 30 kilometres (18 miles) from the city of Beni.

It said in a statement late Wednesday that it still had staff and equipment in place in DR Congo after dealing with the May-July outbreak, and this would give it a "head start."

However, the outbreak "is occurring in an environment which is very different from where we were operating in the northwest," it quoted Peter Salama, deputy director-general for emergency preparedness and response as saying.

"This is an active conflict zone. The major barrier will be safely accessing the affected population."

One of the world's most feared diseases, Ebola is a virus-caused haemorrhagic fever that in extreme cases causes fatal bleeding from internal organs, the mouth, eyes or ears.

It has a natural host in a species of tropical African fruit bats, from which it is believed to leap to humans who kill and butcher the animals for food.

In the worst outbreak of Ebola, the disease struck the West African states of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2013-15, killing more than 11,300 people.

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